

In the Claims

Claims 1-13 are cancelled

14. (Allowed) The brace of claim 32, wherein said latch and latch housing comprise an eccentric element that moves into and out of engagement with a locking mechanism, whereby the angle of the rear strut relative to the rear portion may be adjusted.

Claims 15-16 are cancelled.

17. (Allowed) The brace of claim 32, further comprising a head strap extending from said occipital support.

18. (Allowed) The brace of claim 32, wherein said latch housing comprises one or more extensions and the vest comprises one or more locking slots, whereby said extensions and said locking slots engage said rear strut with said vest.

Claims 19-23 are cancelled.

24. (Currently amended) A cervical brace comprising:

a cervical collar having front and rear portions, wherein said rear portion comprises an occipital support;

a vest comprising a front plate and a back plate, and means for attachment of said front plate to said cervical collar front portion to limit movement of said front plate with respect to said cervical collar, wherein said back plate is free to move with respect to ~~from attachment to~~ said cervical collar rear portion.

25. Cancelled

26. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~1949~~ further comprising:

adjusting the vertical height of ~~the chest plate~~ said anterior plate assembly independently of said adjustment of the relative position of said chin strut and said chest plate.

Claims 27 -30 are cancelled.

31. (Currently amended) The cervical brace of claim ~~27~~35 wherein said chin strut is adjustably attached to said ~~chest plate~~anterior plate assembly.

32. (Allowed) A cervical brace comprising:

a cervical collar having front and rear portions, wherein said rear portion comprises an occipital support;

a vest comprising a front plate and a back plate;

a rear strut extending between said occipital support and said back plate;

a rear strut latch, whereby the relative position of said rear strut may be adjusted both angularly and vertically;

a latch and latch housing disposed on said rear portion; and

wherein said latch housing comprises one or more receiving elements that engage said latch to adjust the relative distance between said cervical collar and said vest.

33. (Cancelled).

34. (Currently amended) A cervical brace for attachment to a cervical collar of the type having a chin support disposed beneath the chin of a wearer, the cervical brace comprising:

a chest plate adapted to be secured to the thorax of ~~a~~said wearer;

said chest plate having a portion disposed over the sternum of the wearer; and

a chin strut ~~attached to the chest plate and extending~~ from said sternum area of said chest plate to said chin support ~~non-vertically from the chin of a wearer to the chest plate;~~

~~the~~said chin strut including means for attachment to said chest plate and means for attachment to ~~a said chin support of said cervical collar, said chin support to be disposed adjacent said wearer's chin.~~

35. (New) A cervical brace for attachment to a cervical collar comprising:

an anterior plate assembly adapted to be secured to the thorax of a wearer and having an upper front plate and a lower front plate wherein said upper front plate is adjustably attached to said lower front plate to accommodate wearers of different size and phenotypes; and

a chin strut extending from a sternum area of said anterior plate assembly to a chin support of said cervical collar, wherein said chin strut has a detachable attachment point for attachment of said chin strut to said cervical collar.

36. (New) The cervical brace of claim 35, further comprising a vest wherein said anterior plate assembly is a portion of said vest.

37. (New) The cervical brace of claim 36, wherein said vest further comprises a back plate.

38. (New) The cervical brace of claim 35, wherein said chin strut extends in a straight line from said sternum area of said anterior plate assembly to said chin support.

39. (New) The cervical collar of claim 31, wherein adjustability is provided by attachment of said chin support and said anterior plate assembly using hook-and-loop fasteners.

40. (New) The cervical brace of claim 35, further comprising:

a back plate adapted to be secured to the back of a the wearer;

an occipital support; and

a rear strut extending between said occipital support and said back plate.

41. (New) The cervical brace of claim 40 further including straps for securing said back plate to said anterior plate assembly.

42. (New) The cervical brace of claim 40 wherein said rear strut is adjustable and further comprises a strut lock.

43. (New) The cervical brace of claim 42 wherein said strut lock comprises an eccentric lever for locking one end of said rear strut to a bracket affixed to said back plate.

44. (New) A cervical brace for attachment to a cervical collar comprising:

an anterior plate assembly adapted to be secured to the thorax of a wearer;

a chin strut including means for attachment to said chest plate and means for attachment to a chin support of said cervical collar, said chin support to be disposed adjacent said wearer's chin;

a back plate;

an occipital support; and

a rear strut extending between said occipital support and said back plate, wherein said rear strut is adjustable and includes a strut lock, and wherein said strut lock comprises an eccentric lever for locking one end of said rear strut to a bracket affixed to said back plate.

45. (New) The cervical brace of claim 44 wherein said back plate is attached to said anterior plate assembly.

46. (New) The cervical brace of claim 45 further comprising straps for securing said back plate to said anterior plate assembly.

47. (New) The cervical brace of claim 44 wherein said rear strut includes means for independently adjusting the height and angle of attachment of said rear strut to said back plate.

48. (New) A cervical brace for attachment to a cervical collar comprising:

an anterior plate assembly adapted to be secured to the thorax of a wearer;

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a chin strut including means for attachment to said anterior plate assembly and means for attachment to a chin support of said cervical collar, said chin support to be disposed adjacent said wearer's chin;

Cont wherein said latch housing and said latch comprise corresponding serrated surfaces that move into and out of engagement upon rotation of said latch relative to said housing; and

wherein said chin strut is detachably connected to said chin support of said cervical collar.

49. (New) A method of supporting one of the cervical spine or upper thoracic spine of a patient comprising:

attaching a cervical collar having a chin support to the patient;

attaching a chin strut from said chin support of said cervical collar to an anterior plate assembly and adjusting the relative position of the head by selecting a relative position between said chin strut and said anterior plate assembly ;

attaching said anterior plate assembly to the patient's thorax.

attaching an occipital support to the patient;

attaching a rear strut to said occipital support;

attaching a back plate to the patient;

adjusting said rear strut; and

locking, with an eccentric lever, said rear strut to said back plate.

50. (New) The method of claim 49 further comprising securing said back plate to said anterior assembly with straps.

51. (New) A method of bracing the cervical spine or thoracic spine of a patient comprising:

attaching a cervical collar to said patient wherein said cervical collar has a front portion and a rear portion with an occipital support;

attaching a vest to said patient wherein said vest has a front plate and a back plate;

attaching said front plate to said cervical collar front portion; and

leaving said back plate free from attachment to said cervical collar rear portion.